Cooking and eating poultry

Proper cooking of poultry to an internal temperature of 165°F destroys the avian influenza virus and other disease-causing microorganisms.

As usual, you should continue to take the following routine hygiene precautions to ensure the quality and safety of all poultry products (chicken, turkey and eggs):

- Keep all poultry and meat products refrigerated or frozen until you are ready to cook them.
- Thaw all poultry and meat products in the refrigerator or microwave.
- Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods.
- Wash all working surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils and your hands after touching raw meat or poultry.
- Cook all meat and poultry products thoroughly, to an internal temperature of at least 165°F. (Eggs are an exception; they only need to be cooked to 145°F.) Use a food thermometer to ensure the inside of the bird or ground poultry has reached at least 165°F.
- Keep hot foods hot.
- Refrigerate any leftovers immediately or discard them.

Limiting the spread of germs

The best way to prevent the spread of infection is to stop it at its source. You can help keep yourself and your family safe by teaching your children to:

- Wash their hands frequently with soap and water, and do the same yourself.
- Cover their coughs and sneezes and do the same yourself.
- Stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick.
- Stay home from work and school if you or your children are sick.

Talk to your local health care providers and public health officials for more safety tips.

Limiting the spread of germs

The following websites provide more information about avian influenza:

- [www.avianflu.gov](http://www.avianflu.gov)
- [www.usda.gov/birdflu](http://www.usda.gov/birdflu)
- [www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/)

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Avian influenza

A range of viruses, parasites and bacteria naturally reside in wild and domestic bird populations. Some of these may cause disease when transmitted to humans.

Avian influenza, also known as “bird flu” is common in wild birds. Most of the nearly 144 known types of avian influenza cause little or no disease in birds.

Avian influenza is divided into two groups based on the pathogenicity of the virus, or the ability of the virus to produce disease. In poultry most are low pathogenicity and cause few, if any, clinical signs in birds.

The virus causing worldwide concern, first identified in Asia in 1996, is high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1. It causes severe disease and death in poultry and some species of wild birds. Under certain conditions, it can be transmitted to humans, but such cases are very rare and associated with close contact with infected birds. As of August 1, 2006, only 232 human cases of HPAI H5N1 have been documented worldwide and the virus has not been detected in poultry, wild birds or humans in North America.

International control and eradication efforts are underway to stop the spread among poultry flocks and decrease human exposures in affected countries. Scientists are closely monitoring all cases in affected countries. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is working closely with federal agencies and the poultry industry to monitor the health of domestic bird populations.

The signs of HPAI H5N1 in poultry can include any of the following:

- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production and/or soft shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling or purple discoloration
- Nasal discharge, coughing or sneezing
- Lack of coordination
- Diarrhea
- Sudden death without clinical signs or evidence of other obvious causes

Avian influenza viruses can be spread by close contact with infected birds, including contact with their bodily fluids and feces.

Dead birds that are found can be handled using the following routine hygiene precautions that should be used whenever handling dead animals:

- Avoid direct contact with the bird. Wear disposable rubber gloves while handling the bird, or wear gloves that you immediately put through a hot, soapy wash of at least 165°F. (This temperature will kill any disease organisms or parasites that may be present.)
- Double-bag the bird in plastic bags, thoroughly sealing both bags. Place the bird in a sealed garbage can or other safe container where it cannot be disturbed by other wildlife.
- Do not bring the bird inside your home.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke or touch your face with the gloves while handling the bird.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after handling the bird.

Avian influenza viruses can be spread from person-to-person on a worldwide scale.

Observing wild birds

As with handling wild birds, the risk of humans contracting HPAI H5N1 from feeding wild birds or visiting wetlands is very low. However, as a general rule, people should observe wildlife, including wild birds, from a distance. This protects people from possible exposure to any disease and minimizes disturbance to the animal.

Use the following common-sense safety and hygiene practices when watching birds or handling wild bird feeders or equipment:

- Avoid touching wildlife. If there is contact with wildlife do not rub eyes, eat, drink, or smoke before washing hands with soap and water.
- Use disposable or washable gloves when handling or cleaning backyard feeders, bird baths or other equipment. Wash hands thoroughly after handling.